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ABSTRACT

Student councils must be "people-conscious," perhaps doubly so since the success of any council ultimately depends on its ability to relate to its student body--to young people. Many councils, ingrown after years of self-perpetuation, are failing because they no longer get through to people. Speaking to no one but themselves, they have lost their "people-consciousness." And, in many cases, the silent majority of students, unheard and unhearing, have abandoned them. The author of this booklet sees a cure to this sickness of apathy that pervades both sides of many councils. It begins with the development of a new self-awareness by council members and can lead to renewed interest and involvement in council activities by members of the silent majority. In between lies a long road for council members that demands patience, preseverence, and understanding in the face of indifference and apathy. But the rewards, in terms of new human contacts, new experiences, and an invigorated student council, far outweigh the effort. (Author/PC)

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THE SILENT MAJORITY

THE PROBLEM OF APATHY AND THE STUDENT COUNCIL

Kent M. Keith

New Directions for Student Councils, Number Fifteen

The Silent Majority

The Problem of Apathy and the Student Council

by Kent M. Keith

National Association of Secondary School Principals
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

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Foreword

"People-consciousness," says Kent Keith, "is a genuine interest in your fellow students." It is a feeling for the needs and sensitivities of other people, which each of us as individuals must develop towards all others.

Student councils must also be "people-conscious." Perhaps doubly so, since the success of any council ultimately depends on its ability to relate to its student body—to young people.

Many councils, ingrown after years of self-perpetuation, are failing because they no longer get through to people. Speaking to no one but themselves, they have lost their "people consciousness." And, in many cases, the Silent Majority of students, unheard and un-hearing, have abandoned them.

Our author sees a cure to this sickness of apathy that pervades both sides of many councils. It begins with the development of a new self-awareness by council members and can lead to renewed interest and involvement in council activities by members of the Silent Majority. In between lies a long road for council members that demands patience, perseverance, and understanding in the face of indifference and apathy. But the rewards, in terms of new human contacts, new experiences, and an invigorated student council, far outweigh the effort.

The National Association of Student Councils takes pleasure in publishing this booklet, in the hope that its members will begin to take a long and careful look at themselves as well as their Silent Majorities.

Owen B. Kiernan
Secretary
National Association of Student Councils
Executive Secretary
National Association of Secondary School Principals

Author's Preface

THE UNREACHED are silent because no one is speaking to them. Hearing nothing, they are silent. The Silent Majority.

American educators all too often concern themselves with form, not content. The student measures up to all the external requirements, while inside he is slowly dying. Tests, memorization, more tests, more memorization. Dull lectures during the day, busy work at night. High school is a waiting period. Waiting for life. Someday.

If he is a good student, the principal and a few teachers know his scores—but they don't know *him*. If he is a bad student, the principal and a few teachers know his misdemeanors—but they don't know *him*. If he is neither, he slips by totally unnoticed. Teachers have too many faces to contend with. Principals have even more. Students can only remain faces, blurred by red tape and crowded classrooms.

And so, the student steps onto the conveyor belt and rides from one grade to the next. If the student gets off the conveyor belt before he has finished high school, people wonder why. If he stays on until college, and then gets off, people are disappointed. If he rides into college and then loses his way because he is not a self-starter, people are mortified. But why? He never had to be a self-starter before. It was just a conveyor belt. Not an education.

It doesn't have to be a conveyor belt—and the silent can learn to speak. But it is our own muteness that must be cured first. That is the purpose of this book.

The general public looks at student councils kindly, but often with an implicit "They don't really have anything important to do" attitude. Many educators and students themselves have never given much credence to the nation's student councils or what they can do. Student councils have become stereotyped as merely Super Dance Committees, elected by the whole school.

In *The Silent Revolution*, I wrote to explain to high school student council leaders how to get things done—in the system. Now,

I hope to explain what their councils can focus on. *The Silent Majority* is written for high school student council leaders who want to give the student council its noblest meaning and purpose: people helping people. It is written for student council leaders who are willing to break away from many student council traditions in order to make the student council an active agent in the achievement of educational goals in America's high schools.

The First Edition was published as a manuscript in January, 1969. The Second Edition was presented exclusively for the Hawaii Student Leadership Institute in June, 1969; the Third Edition was prepared for the San Diego Student Leadership Institute in September, 1969; and the Fourth Edition, for the California Association of Student Councils State Leadership Training Center in August, 1970.

I would like to thank Dr. Owen Kiernan for his interest in *The Silent Majority* and Mr. Robert Fitzsimmons for his help in preparing this NASC edition for publication.

KMK
March, 1971

Introduction

"And now a report from the chairman of the Spring Bouquet Invitational Gala Dance. Bob?"

"Well, Mr. President, it didn't go too well. Not enough people came. We put up posters and stuff, but the students are so apathetic. The majority of the student body just doesn't care. They don't have any school spirit. Only 50 couples came to the dance out of a school of 1,200. I don't know what to say."

"Well, *I* know what to say," pops up a girl in the back row. "This school ought to be ashamed of itself. People ought to care more. We go to all the trouble to have a nice dance—and people ought to come. They're just irresponsible. Why should we try to do things for them?"

There is some murmured agreement. A boy adds: "They elected us to represent them. Then they don't support us. I think we ought to just forget them—and have our own dances for ourselves."

"Well," said the president sadly, "it really is too bad that students don't take more interest in their school activities. They're really missing a lot. I wish there was a way of getting them more involved. I really do."

In the student council, we very often speak of "the problem of apathy." But rarely do we really understand that it is "the problem of the Silent Majority"—the problem of the students in our high schools who are not involved, who are not reached by what goes on in the classroom or the meeting room. The problem is a tough one. It challenges the very basis and existence of the student council itself. A student council which exists in a vacuum is not really a student council at all. To solve the problem, one must know how to reach the unreached.

That will be our goal in this book—to reach the unreached. We will begin by asking a series of questions: What is the real problem of apathy? Who is involved in the problem? What

should the student council do? What tools should the student council work with? What is required of the student council members as individuals?

After surveying the scene, we will begin prescribing some action. First, we'll talk about what we can do as individual student council members and, then, what changes and projects should be considered for the council as a whole. We'll meet a few members of the Silent Majority on a more intimate level. Finally, we will step back and take a long hard look at both our questions and our answers before deciding what it all means for our traditional activities and the goals of the student council.

For now, I think we can agree that the ghost of apathy has been haunting us too long. It's time to stop throwing up our hands in dismay. The problem can be solved. Let's discover *how*.

Chapter One

Apathy? Never Heard of It

No one is completely apathetic. No one. There is no such thing as an apathetic person. The point is simple: people are apathetic about some things and highly interested in others. Take the student who didn't vote at the last student council election: he is probably a baseball fan and caught the pennant game when you missed it. Or take the student who doesn't do his homework: he may know more about tropical fish than you ever will. Or how about the student who never speaks up in class: he may be the toastmaster of the lunch table.

People are interested in different things. And everybody is apathetic toward some things. But no person is totally apathetic. The question is, simply, *apathetic about what?*

In student council circles, we speak of the problem of apathy as being the failure of the student body to appreciate or participate in what the student council is doing. Actually, this is stating the problem backwards. Why should the unreached be made to conform to the programs of the student council? The student council was elected to represent, not regulate, the student body. Leadership needs to be two-way. Most of the time, the student council is not there to hand down decrees but to choose, formulate, and organize ones which come up.

The problem of apathy is thus a problem of the relevance of the student council. *If the student body doesn't find the work of the student council interesting, it is simply the fault of the student council.* The student council must offer something which is

interesting to the student body. When it doesn't, it gets little response. Everyone is interested in *something*, and those somethings are for the student council to find. If the student council can't find things that interest the student body, it will get—and deserve—a poor response.

This doesn't mean that the student council is just an applause meter, doing whatever the student body wants, regardless of the council's better judgment. It is not a case of relinquishing the role of leader, the role of formulating new proposals and providing direction for the students who elected you. But it is a question of formulating new proposals and providing direction in the areas in which the student body is interested. The leader who hits a home run isn't helping anyone if he's in the wrong ball park to begin with.

You probably have many opportunities to go to many different club meetings, drama productions, community events, and so on. Why don't you go to all of them? Well, you have never gone to the chess club meeting because you're not interested in chess; you skipped *Othello* when it came to town because you wanted to finish a book report; and you didn't go to the groundbreaking for the city hospital because you felt like taking a nap. To the chess club president, the director of *Othello*, and the mayor, you were apathetic by not participating in the activities they were sponsoring.

To you, you were just doing something you liked better. You would object to being called apathetic. After all, if they had been doing something you *were* really interested in, you would have gone. For example, you would have shown up for the science club meeting, and you would have tried to get front-row seats for a concert by a popular rock group. You just want to pick and choose and do the things which interest you most.

Well, so do your fellow students. And if the student council's program doesn't interest them most, they won't show up.

The problem of apathy is thus not a problem that is "out there." It's very much an inside problem. *It is a matter of the student council orienting itself properly toward the rest of the school.* Too many councils assume that students should be interested in what the student council is doing rather than assuming that *the student council should be doing what is interesting to the student body.*

To become relevant, the student council has to go out into the school community and get to know people unlike itself. Many student council members couldn't care less. They live in small cliques, thinking their own thoughts and reinforcing their own values, without so much as blinking an eyelash at the other 90 percent of the school. This small clique may attempt to force its own desires onto a student body that shares few of its values and interests. When the student body doesn't respond enthusiastically, it is a student body of "lazy do-nothings."

Other student councils simply don't know enough. They put on the traditional dances and assemblies that are expected of them. They sponsor activities very suitable for themselves and, when student body support is not forthcoming, they really don't know why. They are dismayed, sometimes they sense real failure, but they don't know why or what to do about it. And so, they just continue dance after dance, assembly after assembly.

Whatever the case, it is small wonder that the student body often doesn't cheer the council on. It has to have something to cheer about, but few councils give it to them.

Apathy? Never heard of it. Irrelevant student councils? There are lots of them.

Chapter Two

The Silent Majority

THE SILENT MAJORITY is the unreached students. And the unreached are unknown to most student councils.

They come late to school in the morning, arriving just before the last bell. They wander through the school day, wondering why the teachers are saying what they are—or, more to the point—wondering what interesting things may happen after school. Lunch hour brings freedom but it is over all too soon. The classroom is hot; other people always do the talking; the chairs are uncomfortable; the teacher is boring.

A good many of the unreached make good grades. But they don't know what it's all for. Why make good grades? It makes parents and teachers happy, that's all. It's something you're expected to do. The subjects have no meaning, no relevance. There is no joy to studying. The unreached scholar is a technician harnessing his mental machinery for the production of a specified output. The teachers decide the output. The unreached scholar performs on schedule. Someday he hopes to study something that is meaningful to his own life. Someday.

Many more of the unreached do not make good grades. It would be nice to make good grades, but that takes brilliance, which many of the unreached are convinced they do not have. Football games are fun, driving around at night in cars is fun, dating and playing around are fun, but school is just there. One should go to school, one should try to learn—but only as a duty. The bell rings and the day's duty is done. Off to better things.

The world of the unreached is a world very different from that of the active student council member. It is not a world with the same values; there is not the concern for grades because bad ones were accepted long ago. It is not the world of recognition because others have already gotten it. It is not the world of promising potential because the individual potential of the unreached continues to be undiscovered by other students and teachers. It is a world of anxiety at times, because the future is so uncertain, or of no anxiety at all, because there is no future. It is a world of lost longings; of things one would like to do but does not have the ability to accomplish, it seems; or of the things one would like to understand, but does not have the insight for, one is told. It is a world with its own joys: friends, parties, comradeship. But it is a world which, if painless, may seem empty and meaningless. No one speaks to the unreached. Hearing nothing, its members are silent. The Silent Majority.

The world of the unreached is not allowed to exist in peace, to run on its own standards of happiness or success. Rather, it is constantly taunted by the standards of another world, the world of the prominent, the world of the student council. This is what they should be, they are told.

The prominent are quite at home with recognition, accomplishment, good grades, praise, and promising futures. They are worried about many things: whether that B+ on the last test will sink their straight A average, whether they can get into the most

select colleges, whether they will be awarded "Outstanding Senior," whether they will finish their extra-credit science project on time, whether they will make the crucial touchdown next Saturday. The prominent stack up recognition for college applications: club memberships, student council positions, speech awards, journalism awards, music awards, sports awards. They take their task seriously and do it well. In society's eyes, they are the most valuable and promising part of the school. And who's to argue?

Perhaps *we* ought to argue. Perhaps it is too easy for us to forget that leaders don't run a society by themselves. There would be no government without clerks, no health without plumbers, no office building without construction workers, no communications between world powers without men to install telephone lines, no operas without the lady at the booth to sell the tickets, and no time for the talk of polite society without farmers growing food and truck drivers bringing it to market. Leaders can make rules and legislate policies, but it's the rest of the nation that obeys or does not obey, carries them out or does not carry them out. A leader can stand at the rudder, but someone has to do the rowing. The leader won't get very far without strength at the oars. It's a fact we forget too often.

We should always praise excellence and seek it in all areas of human endeavor. But that's just it—*all* areas of human endeavor. Society has to be a team. Each member of society has his own role. In that role he depends on, and is depended on by, countless other people. No one can afford to look down his nose at anyone else. We're all in it together.

In most schools, the unreached and the prominent exist side by side as total strangers. Elections come, and the unreached are expected to vote; many do. Football games arrive, and the unreached are expected to cheer; most are happy to. But for the rest of the time, there is little contact at all. The majority of the student body remains silent, unreached by teachers or fellow students, existing only by looking forward to their own pleasures and interests—after the bell rings, and before it rings again.

Ask yourself: how much contact do you have with the unreached? What do you know of your Silent Majority?

Chapter Three

Divided We Stand, United We Just Sit?

THE SILENT MAJORITY differs from school to school. Sometimes its members form a single economic group. Sometimes its members have a single characteristic in common—such as the alienated intellectual. Sometimes it is composed of people who are new in town, because of the opening of a new factory or because a nearby military base moves families in and out very often, and new students find it lonely for a while in their new surroundings. Sometimes its members are from a single racial or religious background, and prejudice is rampant. But more likely than not, your school's Silent Majority will not be one identifiable group. Rather, it will be composed of many types of students with a variety of backgrounds, abilities, and attitudes, bound together only by their silence.

This diversity is a very important fact for the student council to keep in mind. It means that no single program or project is apt to appeal to all of the Silent Majority, much less all of the school. If everyone is interested in *something,* and if each of those "somethings" is different, then we are talking about the student council doing many different things for many different groups of students each year.

At first glance, this may sound very divisive. You don't want a different activity for each group in the school; you want activities that can unify the school. You want everyone to join in and do the same things, much as everyone cheers at a football game. The slogan is "united we stand, divided we fall," so we all have to do everything with everybody.

I'm sure you'll agree that on careful examination, this striving for unity through unanimous participation is not what we're looking for. Actually, when we all have to do the same thing together, we may not stand at all. We may just end up sitting there, completely bored.

Unity should not be judged on the basis of everyone doing the same things. *Unity comes from the feeling that each person is playing his own part, and that his part is important.* Each indi-

vidual is different and will want to do different things. Unity must come from an *acceptance* among people doing different things that each of their roles is important and valued by other people.

Since people have different interests, not to mention different abilities, each should be encouraged to "do his own thing." Thus, the student council will want to have different programs for many different groups. And these different programs should each be carried out simultaneously all year long. They should all go on at roughly the same time; otherwise, you may be trading one group for another. We have pointed out that the student council, as an elite clique, often runs its programs only for itself. But it wouldn't help much to pick another small minority and run programs just for them, because you would still be ignoring a large part of the student body.

There are a few things you can do which will appeal to, and get response from, the majority of the students in your school. But you will probably want to shoot for five or six programs, each of which appeals to a different 15 to 20 percent, and run these programs side by side all year long. That way, you are much more certain to reach each group—without boring any others.

Unity doesn't come from everyone being the same, but from everyone feeling welcome. It's much better that everyone is not the same, because if they were, the competition for the same positions and honors and facilities would be horrendous. It would also be harder to feel like a distinct individual with a unique contribution. Just remember in the student council that *the question is not whether we are all doing the same thing, but whether we all have something to do.* Diversity can be harmonious. Different individuals with different specialties, working together, are what make up the best teams. If the student council can provide team leadership and promote harmony at the same time, it may well be true that divided we stand, whereas united we might just sit.

Each school has many different groups. See if you can't reach them all, on their own ground.

Chapter Four

The Student Council as Keeper of the Keys

A GOOD STUDENT council is an agent for the student body. Its goal is to improve the atmosphere in the school for learning so that as many students as possible can learn as much as possible. To do this, it represents different student views to the faculty or administration; it seeks out student needs in the school; it interprets administration needs and positions to the student body; and it provides appropriate student activities. A student council should initiate and moderate changes in the educational process while working to bring teachers, students, and administrators together to form a constructive school community. The student council's primary responsibility is the activities program, and one of its positive products is active experience in leadership and the development of organizational skills.

Student councils should focus on the process of education. Certainly, there are many other things they can do, but it is in the area of education that student councils are given a special position, a pivotal position between students, teachers, and administrators. It can use its fullest potential if it serves as a catalyst, an initiator of action among those segments of the school community. Service clubs should do the fund-raising or the community projects; the science club should lobby for changes in the environment; the civics class should debate foreign wars. Those are areas in which clubs and classes have special strength by virtue of their common interests and subject matter. The special strength of the council is its speaking and organizing skills, which it should use to discover new interests, set up programs to serve them, and win faculty and student support for them. Student councils can promote many student interests without pursuing all those interests themselves. The student council should use its technical skills and familiarity with school operations to help other students get started on activities. If at all possible, those activities should then be turned over completely to the students involved in them. This maximizes both student council strength

and student participation. Student councils were not meant to be all things to all people; rather, they were meant to help all people be all the things they would like to be.

There are two broad areas in which you might serve as the agent for your student body. The first is helping your fellow students amplify the interests they already have. For the unreached scholar, this may be a matter of helping to form special interest clubs which invite speakers, to go on well-planned field trips, to have debates, and so on. The unreached scholar may see no meaning in his work because it seems so removed from the real world outside of the classroom. Your job is to bring that real world into the classroom or help get the classroom out into the world. French may be dull until you meet a Frenchman; chemistry may get a different reaction when it is related to the fascinating work of a local team of researchers; the city newspaper editor may be able to add some zip to student work on the school paper; working with a local poet may be more inspiring than a busload of English textbooks. The opportunities are almost unlimited.

For the student without academic interests, the question may be that of bringing into the school community those interests which the unreached have developed elsewhere. The unreached who are not academically inclined and have no on-campus activities ought to be given a framework for expressing the real interests they have but are expressing now only after the bell rings. For example, members of a guitar group or a modern dance class outside of school might benefit greatly by having a chance to perform at a school assembly. Such an experience would provide them with recognition and might give them a happier attitude toward school. Ask yourself: does your student council provide a meaningful curriculum of activities for those students who may excel in other things besides calculus and physics and honors English? Many students who drop out of school do so because there is nothing *in* school that they value. It's your job to bring their real interests into the school community, where they can be recognized, applauded, and expanded. Every school has its own traditional channels for praise: music, sports, student council, journalism. More channels must be opened up—and the praise passed around to include the unreached.

The first major area, then, is that of amplifying academic or non-academic interests that the unreached Silent Majority may

have. The second major approach is to help them discover a new area of interest. Maybe nothing turns them on, at least nothing noticeable. Well then, why not try to introduce them to something?

One thing to introduce them to may be the student council itself. One of the purposes of the student council we cited earlier is to provide a real learning experience. Actually, it is one of the most valuable learning experiences in the school. Working on a project with other people, relying on them and they upon you, putting your heads together to solve problems, coordinating actions—all of these things must be learned through experience. The world is getting more and more specialized, and it needs people of talent and versatility who know how to do things which will benefit everyone—more sensibly and in greater depth than if each tried to do it by himself.*

Knowing how to work with other people is not a talent that is restricted to potential U.S. Presidents. It is a talent everyone can and should develop. Working successfully with the student council can be a student's first big step toward participatory citizenship. It is your job in the student council to help as many people have this kind of experience as you can.

Of course, not everyone will want to try the student council. Then how about a school service club for a first step forward? Or maybe the drama club. Or the school band. Or intramural sports. Or painting. Most schools have about 20 organized clubs, specializing in some particular interest or another. These may be a good place for the Silent Majority member to start. Everyone has some things that he would like to do some day. See if you can make that someday today for the Silent Majority members in your school.

The vast majority of the students in your schools is a silent majority. It is your task to reach them. The assignment is clear: the student council must begin the dialogue and begin it strongly. No one is better suited for the job. The student council is an organized group, its members are capable, and its main goal is to enhance the school experience for the students who attend. You can amplify their present interests or provide new ones—or both.

The unreached—but not the unreachable. Let's get started.

* See *The Silent Revolution in the Seventies*, by Kent M. Keith, Chapter One, "That Thing You Call a Student Council," for more notes on the importance of the activities program.

Chapter Five

You Just Ain't Communicatin'

WE HAVE SAID that the student council is responsible for opening the dialogue with the unreached. The question is, how?

Your first reaction may be to run newspaper editorials, send out bulletins, put up posters, and give speeches. These are things you are used to doing, and you are probably good at them. Why not use these media now with the Silent Majority?

Because they won't be effective. In my opinion, a Silent Majority member could hear every bulletin and every announcement, see every poster, and read every newspaper and still not be reached. You can polish your wording and check and double-check the subject matter of your message, but if you're looking for a real response from the Silent Majority, all these media will fail you.

Why? Because, first of all, the members of the Silent Majority do not recognize media messages as being for *them*. And why should they? Who ever speaks to the Silent Majority? Rarely is it the editor of the school paper or the student council president; rarely is it the people who write the messages which are put in their hands or forced into their ears. So why should the Silent Majority hear the impersonal "you" of the mass media and assume that it means them? The "you" means "all you active students," and the Silent Majority *knows* that's who it means. As a result, the Silent Majority hears all the "you are invited to do this" and "you should try that" phrases and automatically discounts them.

The first problem, then, is to convince the Silent Majority that you really are talking to *them*. The second problem is to get them to respond.

Notice that we said the student council is responsible for opening a dialogue. A dialogue is *between* people, not *to* people. It requires interaction; it requires responses from both sides. Unfortunately, all of the traditional modes of communication—the newspaper, the bulletin, the announcement, the poster—are one-way. None of them provides the means for a *dialogue*. Silent

Majority members act only as receiving sets. They don't have their bulletins to read back, they don't print their own counter-editorials, they don't put up posters in response to what you have said. They just listen.

To be effective at all, the one-way communication requires the receiver to initiate action. When you say, "There is a student council meeting today. All interested students may attend," you are depending on the individual student who is listening to the bulletin to make up his mind to do something about it. He has to be a self-starter. He has to feel welcome and decide to go all on his own. For this reason, *none* of the Silent Majority is apt to respond to your one-way communications. By definition, you are trying to reach the students who up until the present do *not* feel welcome, who are *not* self-starters in regard to school activities.

If the mass media don't get a response from the Silent Majority, what does? *You* do. But first, you have to learn how to beam in on the right channel.

Chapter Six

People-Consciousness

REACHING PEOPLE depends on you and something about you which is very intangible, your attitude toward other people. What you need is a genuine interest in your fellow students. Let's call it people-consciousness.

People-consciousness is vitally important and is the whole foundation for our approach. But reaching people is not easy. To do it successfully, you have to care about people and be conscious of their needs and desires. Let's begin our awareness of others with an awareness of ourselves.

Glad to Meet You, Self

Personally, I think it is easier to know and appreciate other people once you know yourself. The key word is "awareness," and it can exist on a very simple level. For example, why did

you oversleep this morning? What caused you to get sick last week? How long does it take you to write a good term paper? These are the kinds of questions you should always be asking yourself. It will help you learn what you can do and what you can't. Knowing how and why you function is extremely important. It can tell you how to get the most out of your day and your life.

Self-knowledge begins with what you can do and continues with what or who you are. Let's go to the basics here. What are the things that people need? Perhaps love, security, sense of worth, recognition, a meaning for one's life. Do you see all these needs within yourself? Take a good look. Which needs are the greatest for you? For some, it will be the warmth of human love; for others, financial and physical safety; for still others, a sense of worth and purpose in life. But all will share the same basic needs and desires. At their most fundamental level, all men look very much alike. This means that if you understand yourself at the most fundamental level, you've taken the first step toward understanding all men.

You've heard the phrase, "No one has it all." We forget that too often. No one can get everything he wants. The businessman on the go may have financial security, but he may lose the love that his family would give him if he were home. A missionary or social worker may have a great sense of purpose in life, but he may never have financial security. A brilliant writer may gain national acclaim, but he may constantly be lonely in his work. A young millionaire may have inherited a bank, but he may have no purpose in life. And so it goes. No one has it all. The question each of us must answer is not how to get it all, but how to find that which is important to us.

Of course, there are some things that are important to us that we can't get. What happens then? Well, in some cases we will keep trying, and in others it is healthy to just face up to the fact that we haven't made it.

There is nothing dishonorable about failing. The only dishonor is in not trying at all. Too many people don't realize this. They try to cover up for failures, large or small. A lot of people pretend that they never wanted it in the first place—the sour grapes approach. Others find a substitute, something "better" than what they "used to" want. Some people blame it on someone else: failure wasn't their fault; it was that bungling idiot who got in

the way. Then there is the whole realm of escapism: daydreaming, movies, books. Many people seek vicariously the victory that they wanted in real life.

There are other effects which result from not getting what we want. If we want it very badly, our system may shift gears into overdrive. Here we discover a whole new list of human traits like jealousy, greed, possessiveness, and dishonesty. What makes you jealous? Seeing that someone else has what you want. What makes you greedy? Or possessive? A real insecurity, an insecurity that you hope to satisfy by stacking up gold pieces or by putting a 24-hour watch on your girl or boyfriend. What makes you dishonest? Perhaps in certain situations you feel that to tell the truth would be to destroy your reputation, and recognition and acceptance are too important to you to do that.

What does this have to do with the Silent Majority? A whole lot. The obvious point comes directly from the Christian tradition: let he who is without blame cast the first stone. We are always jumping on people we consider dishonest, immoral, stupid, petty, greedy, and so on. And yet, these are all things we have within ourselves—just in varying degrees.

The point is simply that you should know that if you are honest with yourself, you'll discover your emotions do a lot of twisting and turning—just like everyone else's. If you think it's hard to be humble because you have so much to be vain about, slow up a moment and take a good look. You'll want to get down off that pedestal you enjoyed standing on, and it's good if you do. It's very windy and lonely high up on a pedestal.

Obviously, what each one of us finds out about ourselves is that we are a mixture of good and bad, of admirable and not so admirable. The first thing to do is to accept the fact. You'll get nowhere if you don't like yourself, so accept what you are. The second thing is to make what you are as good as possible. Work on the faults. Learn, grow, change in areas of weakness.

You have to respect yourself before you can help others. The reason is simple: who would be proud of giving to someone else something which he himself did not value? You have to respect what you are, you have to value what you are before you can in good faith offer it to anyone else.

In the same way, you have to recognize and accept your own faults before you can forgive others for theirs. If you hate yourself for your own faults, it will be difficult not to hate other peo-

ple for theirs. So accept humanness and work to make it as faultless as possible.

Balancing the Background

A very important part of understanding yourself is an understanding of your own individual background. The importance of the way you were brought up cannot be over-emphasized.

Some of us would walk all the way around the school *backwards* to avoid passing certain groups we have been taught to avoid. It is so easy to look down on nearly everyone. We despise the dumb, castigate the dirty, avoid the uncouth, and ridicule the different—with pride. Such attitudes are clearly harmful in reaching our fellow students. A greater tolerance must be achieved.

Regardless of your own background, one thing is obvious: your parents raised you with specific attitudes and values. Those attitudes and values served to guide you as you grew up. Now, armed with your parents' insight and guidelines, you can—and should—expand your scope of interest and behavior. The narrowness of your background can be balanced by having new experiences, meeting new people, studying different ethical codes, and mixing with people of all persuasions. This does not necessarily mean to disobey or disavow your parents. What it does mean is that parents can give you the provisions and maps and available pathways for life, but the journey and climb are your own. Make it a balanced trip. You don't have to agree with everyone you meet on the trail but, by all means, stop to talk. He may have the better way.

Attitude No Platitude

It takes a while to accept the fact that some basic human traits are shared by all people—but it *is* a fact. Once you realize it, life is full of delightful discoveries and rediscoveries: people are people, all are worth knowing, and each needs the other's help in some way.

A lot of time must be spent looking inward and considering the whole question of our upbringing, our attitudes toward other people, who we are and how we behave. Our behavior may be the key to the solution of the problem of apathy and the Silent Majority. It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of your attitude toward your fellow students. Your attitude does most of the communicating. Other students take their cues from the

way you behave toward them. If you are not interested in them, they will sense it immediately, and you will have lost your whole chance to reach them. Your attitude is something you really can't fake. No matter what words you use, or how wide your smile, or even what you *do*, if you really aren't sincere, you won't pull it off. Your fellow students aren't stupid. Everyone can detect an actor.

A sincere attitude is the most important key to opening the gates that lead to the Silent Majority. It is your one and only real tool; it is your only major resource. If you are sincere and it shows in everything you do, then you've at least made it to first base. People will sense that sincerity and be willing to talk as well as listen—and maybe even help out. Whatever your attitude, it is the signal-giver. If it is sincere and concerned, it will be contagious in a positive way.

Brother, Why Bother?

Some students are bound to say, "Why bother? Why not let the Silent Majority waddle their way through life the way they are? You can't help them, and they won't come and get help. You'll just wear yourself out."

Well, if you really work hard at anything, it can wear you out. The real question is, what would be the most meaningful way of spending your life? Only you can answer the question, and only you should answer it.

I've got a hunch, though. What is important to you? I mean, really important. The things you don't talk about much, perhaps, but are important. It might be a girl or boyfriend. That's people and worth bothering about. Or is it your family? People again. Maybe what's important is applause for some achievement. Applause comes from people. Or is your goal to make some new scientific discovery? It won't mean much unless other people appreciate or benefit from it. My guess is that whatever you come up with as really important will involve—and completely depend on—other people. Personally, I think people is what life is all about. One thing is certain—you can't run away from other people. You can't, and don't, exist in a vacuum.

Your values, your thoughts, your possessions, all come from or involve other people. Your choice is not to ignore people; your only choice is whether you will do well by them. My own feeling is that doing well by people ought to be a major goal in your life. In that sense, awards, diplomas, scientific achievements, new dis-

coveries are all empty unless people are helped, unless people appreciate them.

Being conscious of people is like being conscious of life. Since it is people who make up life, people-consciousness provides for a rich one.

Why bother? Maybe because people are all there is to bother about. Why not start now, learning how to work with, and for, people?

Chapter Seven

Getting the Student Council Out: "Each One Help One"

In part one, we discussed the keys to understanding the problem of apathy and the Silent Majority. Now, in Part Two, we will look over the solutions which are available to us.

We said that if the mass media don't reach the Silent Majority, you can. The communication must be two-way on a face-to-face basis. You yourself are the medium. You communicate by what you are as a person.

The idea is "each one help one." You go out into the school and begin to meet individuals who are different from yourself. For your own part, you'll learn to look at the student council and the school through someone else's eyes. At the same time, you may be able to help your fellow student develop some of his own interests through the activities program. For both of you, it can mean establishing basic human contact absent from many schools today: real interaction between real people.

Reaching people on an individual basis takes a lot of time, and it means that in the most significant sense you won't "reach" a school of 1,500 students in one or even several years. Communicating with the Silent Majority means more than one encounter with the same individual. It means a slow build-up of mutual confidence between two people. It's not the kind of thing that the Silent Majority is used to turning on and off, so you have to stick with it. It takes time, and that's what you don't always have.

What is a practical goal? Personally, I think that if you yourself get through to 10 really alienated students per year, you'll be doing a great job. With added help from your fellow student council members, you could reach quite a few people. If your council has 40 members and 20 of them communicate with 10 people, you've reached 200. And that's not bad for a year of personal attention. (Your guidance counselor would be thrilled to reach one-fourth as many.)

"Each one help one" is not the only way to reach students, but I think it is the most meaningful. A full student council activities program should be able to reach students on many different levels. But this individual contact is, I think, the deepest one.

Of course, not everyone will need the "depth." When you get through to people, you need to have something tangible to offer. It can be your friendship and interest, but it can also be a valuable or fun activity in school. Your programs are important because they can give the Silent Majority member a place to fit into the school framework. Your activities program can provide breadth; your own friendship can provide depth to the student's school experience.

For some students, an activity that stimulates him will be enough to get him interested in school and start the ball rolling. For others, personal help as well as a relevant activity is needed.

Brands X and Y

How do we go about helping someone? It's a tricky business. The way you approach your fellow students in this matter is of the utmost importance. It's easy to do it the wrong way. To show you what I mean, let's take an example:

President X: This president thought it was a nice idea to get more people involved. "Why not help out the unimportant students of the school by giving them little jobs with the student council?" President X started by approaching a fellow who had been in his homeroom once. Brad was not as good a student as President X, nor was he in any school activities. He just liked to hang around with five or six other guys.

"Hiya, there, Brad baby," said President X.

Brad grunted hello.

"Say, Brad, how'd you like to have a job with the student council? If you're good, you might get promoted. How'd you like

to be a big shot like me? People would look up to you. You could go around with me and the other student council guys. I'd let you sit next to me every once in a while at council meetings. What do you say?"

Brad grinned and turned to the other guys. "Hey, boys, look at this. The big man says he can make me important. He says he'll put frills on my collar and teach me to say 'yes, Mr. Principal' and 'no, Mr. Principal.' What would you think of that, hey, boys?"

There was a good deal of laughter and jeering at President X. "The friends I got now, they already think I'm important," Brad said. "I wouldn't go around with you student council pansies if you paid me."

President X was furious by now. He came to help and they were jeering at him. "You're just a bunch of scummy Neanderthal slopeheads," he railed at them, his face flushed.

Brad and his friends grew suddenly silent. "Get out," said Brad with fire in his eyes. "Get out before I throw you out."

President X departed, muttering to himself that caring for people just doesn't pay. He had tried to help, but, boy, he wasn't going to be treated like that, by golly.

President Y: This President thought a while about the big gap between himself and his school's Silent Majority. He admitted that he really didn't know much about closing the gap. At any rate, he figured it would take a while. But he wanted to start.

He started small. He talked with John on the bus on the way home one night about football. Next time he saw John in the lunchroom, he sat down for a chat. He figured that John wouldn't take charity, so instead he asked John to help him. He asked John about woodworking, something in which both of them had an interest. After several casual visits, John started asking President Y about some of the other things he was doing. President Y talked about student council and why he liked working on it. He invited John to a couple of student council meetings. John refused: "They ain't my crowd. . . . No, no thanks." Though John felt that he wouldn't be comfortable at a council meeting, he did work on a project later in the year—the senior dance. His decorations for the stage were warmly received by his fellow students.

Sure, it wasn't exactly having your name in lights. But it felt good. Maybe he'd try something bigger next time.*

Contents Explosive: Handle With Care

As you move forward in your school, I would like to recommend some normal caution. President Y did a pretty good job: he wasn't insulting, he wasn't condescending, he didn't press too hard. On the other hand, he encouraged by example, and his own interest in others was returned by interest in what he was doing.

As a student leader, you know that human relations are complex matters and that all of them are at least potentially explosive. That doesn't mean we should be afraid to do things, but it does mean that some things we should handle with care. Obviously, no individual has a license to play with the lives of other individuals. Psychiatrists and social workers spend years in training—and even they don't pretend to have all the answers. Please don't try to manipulate someone's life because you read a psychology book and are sure the outcome will be favorable. For all the theories, charts, and diagrams, people remain delightfully unpredictable. Don't take the risk of hurting someone. If you come across someone who you feel is in very serious need of help, try to get that help through professional guidance or medical professionals. That's what they're there for. Your role should be to give them some insight, so they'll have a head start on the case. Fortunately, what most Silent Majority members need is something very simple, something which can be provided at almost no risk at all: human attention, kindness, respect, and recognition. It is one of the serious faults of our school communities that so few students receive this kind of simple human approval or affirmation during the course of the school year. Let's take a look at three examples of genuine interaction between student council members and members of the Silent Majority.

Autos, The Underground, and Appendicitis

Maloicious is a tough guy. He feels that he has no choice about it, actually. With a name like Maloicious, you can't help but be defensive. His friends call him Mal. His enemies call him Mal-

* See *The Silent Revolution in the Seventies,* Chapter Four, the section on "Matching Moods," for more notes on establishing rapport with individuals and groups.

Oh-Wish-Us, but only behind his back. When Mal finds someone playing with his name, he beats them up. Left-handed.

Mal is the leader of a group of about 10 guys. They hang around their cars. They are proud of their vehicles, so they arrive at school early in the morning and sit in their cars so people can see them when they come to school. During lunch hour, they go down and sit in their cars again and play their radios full blast. After school, they see who can make the most noise and burn the most rubber while roaring out of the school parking lot to scare the girls.

Every once in a while, Mal wants to do something besides sit in his car. So he sits on the curb. That's how George, the student council vice-president, met him. George rode a scooter to and from school, and one morning he was having trouble with his engine. He got to the parking lot, but he killed the engine and it wouldn't start again. Mal just watched as George pumped and pumped and pumped. Mal thought it was pretty funny, and he started mimicking George. This made George angry. "If you're so smart, why don't you come over and fix it yourself?" he called out to Mal. Mal just laughed and laughed. George was just going to walk off when Mal said, "Okay, okay, hang on. Let me look at it." George's face was flushed but he kept quiet while Mal mumbled around for a moment. "Huh," he said awesomely. "You can't expect a scooter to go when the gas tank is turned to Off, can you? Then George realized that when he had meant to switch on the reserve tank, he had turned the knob in the wrong direction. He began to chuckle. Mal chuckled. George said thanks. He asked Mal how he knew about scooters, and Mal explained that he used to ride one but "now he was on cars." George asked which car was his. And Mal showed him—for at least 20 minutes. "Looks like it's straight out of the showroom," George said. "Is it really yours?" Mal burst all his buttons with pride. "It's nothing like what I'll have some day," he said.

George and Mal started saying hello and nodding in the halls and talking a little here and there, particularly when George rode in every morning. A few months passed. Then at a school assembly, Mal saw George on stage and found out he was on the student council. It interested him a bit. He mentioned to George the next morning that he'd seen him up there in the assembly, and George talked a little about the council.

George sensed that Mal was really interested, but Mal didn't want to show it. "It couldn't be as good as a drag race," he laughed it off. Mal was embarrassed to show interest in front of the boys, so he talked in terms of "someday going in there and cleaning the rascals out." For his part, George thought over some of the different ways in which Mal might become involved.

One thing was sure: it would have to have something to do with cars. That was the area in which Mal was the most comfortable and had the most confidence. But what? They could have him emcee an assembly on car safety, but that might be too big for a first step. A car show was considered—but then the answer dawned. The student council would need people to drive the cars to carry the Homecoming queen and her attendants at the Homecoming game. Mal was asked if he and his boys would contribute five cars and drivers. He thought about it and said, "Yeah, okay. I guess someone has to do it." George was really pleased. It was just the right combination: Mal could lead his boys; they could show off all their cars and provide a service to the school at the same time. When the Homecoming game arrived, there was a slight mishap: Mal was watching the photographers while he was driving out on the stadium track and as a result he ended up in the pole vault sawdust off the track. However, the queen had enough presence of mind to use this opportunity while they were off the road to "review" the other cars while they passed by, as though it had all been planned. Mal pulled back out onto the track and brought up the rear of the carcade.

Mal's gang teased him afterwards about driving off the track, but Mal had his picture in the paper and he told the guys to keep their mouths closed. It had been a big day for him.

Two months passed, and one day George had an idea. He counted the number of people he passed on his way to school. Some of them had a long way to walk. Arriving at school each morning and watching Mal and his friends sitting in their cars convinced him that they might want to start a "transportation pool" for students who lived at a distance from school and had to spend an hour each day just walking to and from classes. He mentioned it casually to Mal. "Yeah," said Mal, "I thought about giving the *girls* a ride every once in a while." George suggested that he might find out how many of his friends would like to do

it; then get a city map and set up transportation for the most distant areas. Each fellow could give four or five people a ride. George and Mal went ahead and set it up on a very informal basis. They helped 24 students in all. George "leaked" the idea to the school paper, and they ran a little article on Mal and his group.

Mal thought this was the greatest thing that had ever happened to him. He and his boys became great friends with the students they helped. He really felt he was a part of what's happening. Although the car pool lasted only a few months, Mal met dozens of students he had never seen before and began to feel he was an important part of the school community.

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Mark comes from a small family. His father is an executive in a big company and his family moves a lot. Being new in the school this year, Mark knew no one at first. He kept to himself. He would have run for a student council position, but elections had been held in the spring before he arrived.

He did try out for a committee position, but he wasn't known by the officers and didn't get in. He went to some student council meetings as an observer, but at one meeting when he spoke up, he was asked if he was an official homeroom representative. He said no, and they asked him to leave. Angered by this, he wrote letters to the editor of the school paper but they were never printed.

After three months in the school, he started an underground paper. He criticized the student council as being trivial, outmoded, a farce. He said the school paper was so nice that it couldn't even report the news, or was so gossipy that it never had any. He said both the student council and the newspaper were run by petty people who wouldn't know how to pour the water out of a boot if the directions were written on the heel.

Bernard was the student council president. He got a hold of a copy of Mark's newspaper and was really mad. He went to see Mark. What followed was not a discussion—it was an outpour. Bernard raged about how unfair the underground paper was. What did Mark know about how hard the council was working?

Mark listened a little impatiently. He asked Bernard to tell him just what the council *had* accomplished. Bernard listed two dances, a movie, a bulletin board campaign, and a football rally.

Mark told him that dances and posters were silly when kids were dropping out of school, using drugs, breaking laws, misusing sex, and spending their time at protest demonstrations. He said the student council consisted of nice people who did nice things—mainly for each other.

Bernard was upset about it. He sensed that Mark was sincere, but sincerely wrong. Mark, on the other hand, was willing to prove his point. He suggested that he and Bernard go around together and talk to some of the kids in the school, and ask them what they were really interested in. Bernard said no, that was ridiculous.

But the idea stuck in his mind. One night, going home on the bus, he tried to start a conversation with the student sitting next to him. He asked him if he had gone to the last school dance. The student laughed. He said it cost too much and his friends never went to those things anyway.

During lunch hours, Bernard started sitting away from his own group. He felt extremely awkward. Most of the things he offered up as conversation flopped. Sometimes they laughed at him; other times, they just ignored him. Quite often, they stopped talking when he sat down. For the first time, Bernard himself felt like an outsider. It was an uncomfortable feeling. He was irritated: he hadn't expected this.

By this time, Mark had published his second newspaper, and the principal was getting impatient. He called Mark into his office and demanded that he stop the newspaper. Mark refused. He said that what he was saying was true, and it needed to be said. The principal told him he would be suspended if he put out another issue. Mark promised that he would.

When Bernard heard about this, he went to talk to the principal. He said that he didn't agree with Mark on everything, but he was learning some new things as a result of the underground paper. He thought that suspending Mark would only cause a ruckus. The principal said that he thought Mark was just a crackpot, a demagogue. Bernard said he thought there was more to him than that. He said he thought Mark represented a large portion of the student body.

The principal was unconvinced and said his position was firm: one more issue of the underground press and Mark was out of school. Bernard left the principal's office very disappointed.

He had to act quickly. Perhaps if he could do a survey of school attitudes toward the council and the newspaper, he might learn more about the student body himself, and he might be able to lend some factual evidence to Mark's stand. For a week he talked with dozens of members of different homerooms. In addition, he had 100 students fill out questionnaires. Some patterns soon emerged, and they were just what Mark had been saying. It came as no small eyeopener for Bernard. He had begun to get the idea, but this clinched it for him. He still felt that a lot of criticisms of the student council were not based on fact. But the failure to communicate was his own.

Bernard talked to the principal several times the next week. He tried to convince him that Mark was helping, not hurting, the school. He was voicing legitimate concerns. To kick him out of school would surely cause a student-administration confrontation, and it would eliminate one of the many voices that needed to be heard in the school community. The principal finally agreed, on the condition that the student council accept responsibility for Mark's work.

Bernard got Mark to address the student council and to talk with the editors of the school paper. Neither group really liked what he had to say. Finally, the student council agreed to be responsible for the underground paper. Their main complaint was that Mark should take greater efforts to make sure his information was always accurate. The school paper said Mark could write a weekly column for them, but Mark said no, he didn't want to have anything to do with the school paper.

Bernard felt he had learned a lot about the Silent Majority from Mark and went to talk with him several times during the year. Under Bernard's leadership the council began to change in format and content. Instead of poster campaigns, it began to focus on curriculum changes and new activities. Bernard was sure the council was becoming more relevant.

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Diane is a very shy girl. She gets good grades, but her teachers complain that she daydreams in class and her parents feel she should work much harder. She has very few close friends. Her one activity is babysitting.

Mary, a student council representative, met Diane in French class. Diane was much better at French than Mary, and occa-

sionally Mary asked for help. One day Mary noticed that among Diane's other books was a book on medicine as a career. She asked Diane if she wanted to be a doctor. Diane said, "No, I couldn't be a doctor. I'd get too nervous; I couldn't do it at all. I'd probably make people sicker than they were before." Diane said she'd just become a nurse and take people's temperature.

Mary knew Diane had the talent and dedication to be a good doctor if she wanted to be. It was upsetting that she had so little self-confidence. Months passed. One day, Mary got sick and went to the school infirmary. To her dismay, there was no nurse on duty. She lay down for a while and, when she continued to get worse, she asked the assistant principal to be released from school early so she could go home. She asked the assistant principal why there was no nurse on duty. He said that there weren't enough nurses in the school system, so one couldn't be in each school all day long.

The next time in class, Mary mentioned it to Diane. Diane was noticeably upset and said, "At least someone could have been there to take your temperature." She added, "Even I could have done that."

Mary found out what she wanted to know. She went to the assistant principal and told him that she thought he could get Diane to spend her study hall in the infirmary to take care of anything which might come up. The assistant principal thought it was a good idea. He called Diane into the office. She said she wasn't much good, really, but at least she could make people comfortable, take temperatures, and get help when it was needed. It was agreed.

Diane took her new job seriously. She didn't want to admit it, but she read and re-read every first aid manual she could get her hands on. She got the school to buy more equipment: a stretcher, another thermometer, crutches, more aspirins, towels. Most of the people who came in just had colds or sprained ankles. But Diane enjoyed it. The regular nurse was not happy about it, at first. She didn't want some kid messing with her infirmary. But Diane was very polite, and it was soon obvious that she knew what she was doing. The nurse began to rely on her heavily.

One day, a boy came in with a terrible pain in his stomach. He was nearly doubled over; nothing would ease the pain. Diane began to panic. This was her first difficult case. She ransacked her memory for first-aid techniques. She tried to remember what

the symptoms reminded her of. Then it came. This was just like the time her sister had had appendicitis. First she thought she was going a bit too far. It was probably just the school lunch and a very upset stomach. But the boy began to shake, and shake something awful. He was in a cold sweat. Diane wanted so badly to have some help. Where was the nurse? She was at another school. Didn't somebody know what to do? She decided she couldn't wait any longer. She called the hospital and asked for an ambulance. She was so nervous when she asked for it she had to repeat her request three times. Then she went to tell the assistant principal what she had done. He was a little upset that she had acted without telling him first, but he didn't criticize. When the ambulance arrived, they helped get the boy on the stretcher and then followed to the hospital.

The boy was examined and operated on immediately. An acute case of appendicitis.

The assistant principal had notified the parents, who rushed to the hospital. They could not do enough for Diane. Diane was embarrassed. But maybe she had done the right thing. At least, that's what the surgeon said. Maybe she really *had* done the right thing. It was a good feeling. She began to wonder if she might not make a good doctor after all.

Guidelines

These three examples suggest some guidelines which might be referred to from time to time by student council members meeting and working with Silent Majority members. A few of those guidelines might be as follows:

1. *Learn what the other fellow is interested in, and approach him on that level.* It's the best way of speaking his language. Also, since it is an area in which he knows something and is confident, you won't stir up any feelings he may have of being outdone or threatened.

2. *People prefer gradual increases of responsibility.* Don't suddenly hand a committee chairmanship to someone who has never held a post of that nature. Start small, promote step by step. If John did stage decorations as a sophomore, he might do all decorations as a junior and run the whole committee as a senior. Joe may tell you what he really thinks, informally, as a junior and then in public student council meetings as a senior. Make sure you don't give a student a job which is so big that he is totally swamped and demoralized by it--not knowing what to do or even where to start. Someone who gets stung the first time will not be back for more.

3. *Give a student something he can do.* For a student's own self-confidence, there's nothing for success like success. If he can do well each job

that you give him, he will not only grow with each experience, but he will be willing to assume more and more responsibility.

4. *Don't force people into a position; encourage them into it.* No one likes to be forced into things. Even if you're sure that participation in a project would be good for someone, you'll have to let them prove it to themselves. Don't teach students to swim by throwing them into the water and wishing them luck. If they do learn, they'll be bitter because that was the way they had to learn. If they don't learn, they're done for. Freedom of choice is important: everyone wants the freedom to make his own mistakes as well as his own successes. Make sure the doors are open, but don't shove people through them.

5. *Patience is important.* Perseverance may make all the difference between your success or failure to reach someone. Remember that there are many barriers you must overcome with each Silent Majority member. Some of them will be overcome rapidly—all of them can be. But don't give up if progress is slow. You have to convince the Silent Majority member that you are indeed interested in *him*. Then, you have to understand that he will pretend he doesn't want a lot of things that he really *does* want. Perhaps he says he doesn't want them because he doesn't think he can ever have them. It takes time to convince him that he *can* have them. And so on. You will face many reverses, and you may even fail. But success is rarely fast; let time work for you. Patience!

6. *You don't have to agree with people to reach them.* In some cases you will agree with the person you are trying to reach—that is to say, your values or attitudes are much the same, at least in spoken words. Agreement makes things easier—but disagreement doesn't make it impossible. What if the Silent Majority member has an attitude that you feel strongly against? Well, if you are right, maybe the best thing you can do for the Silent Majority member is to give him another view, another reference point. But first, understand his view—with sincerity. If he senses your sincerity, he may be willing to listen to your ideas. And even if you don't end up agreeing, so what? You can still respect each other and work together on things. Reaching people doesn't mean that everyone will agree. It means that everyone will feel more welcome, respected in his view, a part of the school community. You can reach students without converting them.

7. *The "little successes" are apt to be the biggest ones.* Don't set your sights on getting a Silent Majority member to suddenly emerge from anonymity into the student council presidency. First of all, it's hard to do. More important, it is probably not the best thing for that Silent Majority member. As we have noted above, you should work gradually, step by step. The sudden pressure of going from a "no one" to the Big Man on Campus can be enough to cave somebody in. The little successes are apt to stick, without reverses. The great big ones may boomerang and hurt the Silent Majority member as a result. Your sights should be set high. Remember, however, that you have only a few years in high school, and each Silent Majority member spent four times as many years becoming what he is than you have years to help him grow in new directions.

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So don't be disappointed if you seemed to help, but not very much: you probably helped as much as you could. The Silent Majority is indeed a group. But to solve a group problem, you often have to reach each individual. With people-consciousness, sincerity, and good technique, you can reach quite a few. Each one help one—and you'll end up way ahead.

Chapter Eight

Letting the Silent Majority In: "Representation without Complication"

While working on the basis of relevant activities and "each one help one," you may want to initiate some long-range changes for the benefit of the Silent Majority. How easy is it for Silent Majority members to get into school activities? One thing I think you will want to do is to sponsor structural changes in your student councils or clubs, so that more gates are open—and open wider—for more students in the school.

For example, if many student councils are cliques of students who represent only the top 10 percent academically, it's not by a recurring accident at the voting booth. In many schools, the other 90 percent are barred from office.

In a lot of schools, you have to have a B average or better to run for office. This disqualifies about 60 percent of the school. Then, you have to be approved by teachers and advisers, which usually cuts out another 20 percent. The remaining 20 percent runs for office, and the top 10 percent usually gets in. The same thing happens in homeroom elections—the top 10 percent gets in. After the elections, the student council members study together, go around school together, have parties together. The Silent Majority never enters the picture at all. The student council is often very select, very cliquish, and very removed from the rest of the school.

To some people, this is all very natural and right. Why shouldn't the best students be honored by letting them be student council members? Why should students be allowed to run for office if their grades are not of honors calibre?

The answer lies in what your philosophy of education happens to be. In the old days, student council and other activities were called "extracurricular," merely an addition to academic classes. On that basis, student councils and clubs and other activities were only for those who made it first in the academic field. And so it would be silly to elect a C student to office or let a D student into a club.

Philosophies of education have been changing, however, and my own feeling is that speaking of "extracurricular" activities is—and will increasingly be—the wrong way to speak of activities in secondary schools. More and more educators today are viewing a school's "curriculum" as anything which takes place on campus under the direct sponsorship of the school and its faculty. This means that the student council, the French club, and the school dance are all part of the curriculum. Three major phases of curriculum are being defined: academic subjects which are required, academic subjects which are "elective," and the activities program.

This view appeals to me. I feel that activities are very valuable to the learning process. They should not be "extra," and only for those who have done academics first. They are important for every one, straight A's or not. The activities program has its own goals, and entrance to it should not depend on what a student is doing in the other areas.

Keeping a student out of the student council because his grades are bad is like keeping him out of math because he isn't good at English. His performance in one field should not hinder him from performing in another.

As a result of this philosophy of education, more and more educators are suggesting today that the only requirement for a student running for office should be that he is a full-time, registered student at school. No grade points, no teacher approvals, no special endorsements. If the student is registered, he's eligible.

Education can be defined as learning to deal effectively with one's environment. That means learning to read, write, and add—certainly. But it also means a lot of other things—like learning how to be a good citizen, how to take part in the community,

and so on. Now, not all of us will be English teachers or scientists, but all of us will have to try to be good citizens. If the student council is a training ground for citizenship traits, then perhaps the student council is the best thing for *all* students to be involved in and the *only* relevant program for non-academic students.

Allowing more students to run for office—and hopefully getting a broader range of students elected—could be of help in both of the major ways we discussed in Chapter Four. First, having a broad representation for your student council can help immensely toward making your council more relevant. With more varied interests represented, you are apt to do things which are felt to be worthwhile by more of the student body. A council which represents the top 60 percent of the academic student body instead of the top 10 percent is more likely to do better by the whole school. As a result, the student council stands a better chance of amplifying the real interests of the student body. Second, eliminating the tight restrictions on running for office would make it possible for more people to have a chance at another kind of interest—the student council itself. The student council experience could be readily available to more people than ever before.

Representation without complication would make it easier for you to reach the unreached Silent Majority. Unfortunately, any change such as this will appear in advance to make more work and trouble for everyone. To some student council members, opening up elections means more competition when running for office. As a result, they are opposed to it. For other student council members, it means breaking up the student council clique by allowing "undesirables" to get in. Some teachers will regularly oppose opening up elections to everyone. It is natural for them to want to assert the importance of the subjects they teach by keeping out of the running any student who is not doing well academically. Some counselors will want to remove from the list the name of any student who has had a "run in" with him. The principal doesn't want to be bothered with a bunch of troublemakers in the student council—he wants students who behave. Finally, the student council adviser will suspect that a representative student council will mean more work for him. Broad-based councils are not bright-eyed and bushy-tailed groups of oratorical magicians. Representative councils are like the whole

school: some bright-eyed, some dull-eyed; some sloppy and some neat; some who mind their manners and some who don't. Representative councils may not be as easy for the principal, faculty, and the student council advisers to deal with.

On the other hand, the change resulting from opening up elections is apt to be easily managed—in addition to being very beneficial. Let's suppose that you open elections to every full-time registered student of the school and that all each student has to do to run for office is to submit a petition with 25 signatures supporting his candidacy. Perhaps 20 students who are not the "regular" candidates will turn out to run in the election. Right away, you have found 20 students who are interested in the council and have some nerve as well. Whether they win the election or not, you'll want to get them involved in council activities. We've talked about finding students to involve in council activities. What could be nicer than to have 20 students identify themselves *for* you? The ones who win the election will already have the activity they sought; the others should make excellent committee members, if not chairmen.

Having more people run for office means that the elections will be tighter for the present student council "regulars." But what's bad about that? A tough election is more challenging to compete in, and more satisfying if you win. It also might do something for the inner dynamics of the council itself. Do you have members who take their office for granted and get a bit lazy as a result? Every group does. Maybe a tougher electoral system will force these people to think twice about running. And, incidentally, won't the increased competition for office add a little to the prestige of the council? Heavy competition for student council positions shows that people think the positions are important. Is *that* bad publicity?

If 20 Silent Majority members run, six of them may get elected —perhaps five as student council members and one as an officer. This is certainly not an upheaval: these changes start slowly. Next time, you'll try for twice as many. You and the adviser give special help (though not overbearing) to the 20 who ran. Of the 14 who didn't win, nine decide to work in committee or on special assignments. They learn the ropes. During the next election four of them win their own elective positions. And also during the next election, new interested students identify themselves by running. The cycle continues and grows.

You are reaching members of the Silent Majority, and at the same time you're broadening the representation of your council. Competition has made the student council a "tighter ship" that gets more done. New interested students are learning the ropes and working their way to the top. And yet, change is not so radical that it is impossible to handle or gets badly handled. No real problem for you *or* the adviser *or* the school administration.

Of course, no change in any school system is particularly easy—even when it's good. Problems such as this require the mutual understanding and teamwork of students, the student council, teachers, and the school administration.

My own feeling is that if the Silent Majority is being shut out in your school, things can be changed. And you can do it. In *The Silent Revolution*, I discussed the problem of effective change within the school system. The task of making a more representative council is one of the hypothetical examples used in that book to explain the Silent Revolutionary technique.

One area in which you may already have control is in regard to school clubs. Many school clubs have to be chartered by the student council—that is, their constitutions have to be approved every year or so by the student council before the clubs are "official" and are allowed to use school facilities.

I'd guess that 50 percent of all the nation's high school clubs could evaporate into thin air and never be missed. Many clubs don't serve any purpose other than that of being a long, institutionalized social. If it is possible, they are, by-and-large, even more cliquish than the student council. Discrimination against people wanting to get in exists, and of all sorts: intellectual, social, economic, racial. Clubs which are supposedly set up as service clubs or academic clubs soon deteriorate into little party groups, denying entrance to the Silent Majority and doing little that is helpful for the school.

One of the problems with setting up admissions barriers is that it becomes so prestigious to get into a club that students only want to get *in*—not to do anything once they *are* in. By making it hard to get into a club, the challenge becomes getting admitted, not serving the school or promoting a student interest. Meetings are called so that club members can remind themselves how select they are, but not much else takes place.

This is truly unfortunate, because clubs have great potential for reaching Silent Majority members. What better way to reach

someone than through a common interest—like that of a particular school club? This is the irony of admissions barriers. Most clubs are set up to develop a particular student interest. If this is the club's purpose, then the club should be open to students who *aren't* good at the subject yet—the students who *haven't* "made it." How can you promote an interest by leaving out the people who might be interested? You have to bring them in, so that the students who have "made it" can help others "make it" as well. If prestige is important, wouldn't it be prestigious to know your subject well enough to serve as a teacher to another student?

As a student council, you should be able to refuse to charter clubs. Require them to have open door policies in terms of membership, or abolish them. Require them to serve the school through projects or academic interest, or abolish them. Have them report on their activities, get involved in student council projects; have the student council help them in any way to achieve their new objectives. Most schools have anywhere from 10 to 30 clubs. If they were truly open to the Silent Majority, it would be a fruitful activities experience for hundreds of students. Investigate this situation carefully. In most schools, the change is within your power. Use it.

We have discussed admittance to office holding and admittance to school clubs. How about some of the simple changes? For example, do you "admit" students to your own student council office and council meetings? You can at least have interested students speaking at the meetings—whether they vote or not. And you can talk with interested students at your office or meeting place without the pressure that a formal meeting provides.

If each one helps one, and you can establish representation without complication, you're going to start meeting and working with people you've never met or worked with before. We've met a few already. But let me introduce you to a new crew.

Chapter Nine

Hello, I *Think*

If you make it easier for members of the Silent Majority to gain office, and you try to introduce new students into council activities, you're bound to meet some students you aren't sure you are glad to have met. At least, not at first.

There's Elvin, so easygoing that at the first student council meeting he addressed the principal as "Bill old boy." Needless to say, "Bill old boy" was not impressed, or pleased. Then there was Jack, the clever Madison Avenue type, who decided the best way to get students' attention to publicize the school dance was to stage a food fight in the cafeteria. After everyone had gathered around, the fight stopped and Jack made his announcements. He was then hauled off to the principal's office and the washroom.

Joan bought refreshments for an after school meeting—two weeks before the meeting. (Nothing like stale cookies!) Martha offered to organize a group of girls to wash everyone's gym clothes. Everything was fine except for the fact that they left the clothes in the dryer too long, and everyone's garments shrank about two sizes. A lot of people had fits—including tight ones.

Harold was so anxious to get the decorations up in the cafeteria for the school play that he forgot that the PTA was showing films two nights before the performance. All his decorations had to be taken down so the films could be shown. Jim was so late in reserving a room for the student council meeting that the council had to meet in a storage room.

I think you'll agree that a lot of things can go wrong, and having new people at the reins makes the possibility all the more likely. Granted, it's very hard to do, but try to grin and bear it. After all, you've gotten to first base: the intentions were good. The important thing is to keep the learning process moving forward.

Simple mistakes are one thing; they are easy to pinpoint and correct. Other situations are tougher to handle. Let's take Marvin, for example. He led his own group of guys for a couple of years; recently, with the student council opened up to everyone,

he decided to run, and he got elected. Once in the council, he set himself to causing trouble. He voted no on everything, even both sides of the same issues. He didn't wait to be called upon by the president before speaking. He called people names. He had a loud, mocking laugh for everyone. People prayed that he would get sick and not come to meetings. But he always showed up.

You know that Marvin is not all bad, but let's face it, he isn't easy to deal with. First of all, you as a person don't like being called names and laughed at. Second, Marvin won't give an inch to make things easier for you; he won't meet you halfway. Is he just to be borne, or can he be reached? You can only try to do your best, starting on the assumption that he *can* be reached, and meanwhile trying to keep the antagonism down.

You may run across the opposite. Here we find Betty. Betty is a very conscientious girl, a committee chairman. She was appointed after making a good showing in an election which she narrowly lost. The problem with Betty is that she never believes she has done a good job. No matter how thorough her work, or how generous the praise, she insists on long and painful apologies for her "mistakes." This leaves the council quite befuddled, since they approve of her work, and quite embarrassed, since confessions are uncomfortable to listen to.

How long will it take for her to gain self-confidence? What can you do to minimize the depressing and awkward effect that her apologies before the council have on council morale? There are no easy answers.

Sometimes, you'll feel you made a blooper, that you have "created a monster" in a sense. Take Bert, for example. You got him a part in a school play as a swashbuckling swordsman, and now he goes around sneaking up behind people and sticking them in the ribs, shouting "en garde!" It might have been funny the first time—but the fifth time? You can take a little "ribbing," but enough is enough. You wish you could convince Bert that the show is over. Or, you wish you could get him a part in the next show as a quiet, old, reserved grandfather.

You'd worry a little more about Bert if it wasn't for Wayne. Wayne was the "voice of God" at the Christmas assembly. It is May, but Wayne is still the voice of God. Wayne is *always* the voice of God. In the lunchroom, in the classroom, in student council meetings. You just can't get a simple answer to a simple question from Wayne anymore. Dropping his voice to his lowest

bass, he thus-saith-the-Lord's his way through every conceivable eventuality. You're hoping that you can get him interested in the choir, where he can sing Handel's *Messiah*—but along with at least 50 other voices!

And so it goes. Wonderful, warm, human—and frustrating—people. They'll make embarrassing mistakes and pose tough problems in human relations. Sometimes, your help will be rejected or seem to boomerang. But more often than not, with enough patience and tact, you'll get through. The "Hello, I think," will develop into a "Hello, I'm glad we met."

Chapter Ten

Becoming People People

We have introduced you to the Silent Majority and urged each one to help one. Personally, I think that this activity on your part will teach you a lot—about yourself, as well as other people. I think you will suddenly discover the importance of a thing called "tolerance." In the long run, your success with the Silent Majority depends on that word, and its being genuine. You need the ability to understand and get along with people who are very different from yourself.

We started our trek toward tolerance with discussions of self-knowledge and the prejudices inevitable in one's upbringing. There are two other suggestions we could make that have a big effect on achieving real tolerance.

The first is travel. Travel to the next town, to the next country, around the world. Travel can show you other ways of life, how other persons like yourself have solved or attempted to solve human problems. Travel to the next town may show you interesting variations on the way your own life is lived; travel to the next country, some major differences. A trip to Europe can show you the way in which one of the world's oldest civilizations has handled its problems. If you can't travel, read some good social anthropology books and discover the customs and beliefs of other societies through the eyes of trained observers. Whatever you do, the best place to start your "travels" is always in your own neighborhood. Unless you understand what goes on around the corner, you won't know what to compare with the ways of life around the world.

In addition to traveling through the present, you can travel through the past. A study of history can expand your own experience by sharing that of others; it can expand your consciousness in a very real sense. The future has not arrived, and the present is always passing. The only place we can go for more knowledge of man is the past. Otherwise, we are imprisoned by the present—we are, as people, always children, never grown up, never aware of all that has happened before us, never taking advantage of previous human achievements. Without a knowledge of the past, each generation starts out very little ahead of the last one. It is often said that the trouble with the younger generation is that they don't take the time to read the minutes of the last meeting. I think it's true. As students of history, we can attempt to cultivate a sympathetic understanding of the past, to see the people of other days as they saw themselves. This travel through time doesn't take money or government passports. It's all at the library.

The whole point is that people are much alike, differing only in the way they live. How do we know we have the way that is best for us? Or how do we know that there are not ideas held by other individuals or other cultures which could enrich our own lives? We don't. And that is the beginning of true tolerance. We live the life we feel is best for us, knowing, however, that it is not the only way, and knowing that we should seek other ways to incorporate into our own when our own way seems to flag.

If you travel through the present and the past, you discover that your own particular beliefs are apt to be just that—*your own particular beliefs*. That does not mean you must change them, but it does mean that you're in a minority in the world. It's like going outside on a clear night and looking at the stars for a while. You're not very big by comparison.

Americans seem to have great difficulty respecting the views of other cultures. (Not too many star-gazers, here.) "America is always the best." Well, it is—for Americans. But so is France for the French, and China for the Chinese, and Peru for Peruvians. We must realize that we can get along with each other and learn from each other without having to dominate each other. There is a tremendous wealth of human experience around the world that lies waiting to be discovered by us. If we can learn to respect the views of other cultures, that wealth of experience can be ours also.

Quite often, we learn best by looking at people and things which are different from ourselves and our way of life. People of the past are not dead; they live in history and, when we study history, they live in us. And people of the present are very much alive. We have only to walk and talk with them to discover their ways.

I know you'll want to become a people person. Why not get started—in your own neighborhood?

Chapter Eleven

The Failure of Success

MANY YEARS AGO E. A. Robinson spoke very bluntly about success in his poem called "Richard Cory." It describes a wealthy and graceful man who was the embodiment of everything that the common people in his town wanted to be. We are startled, however, when the poet tells us that one summer night Richard Cory went home and put a bullet through his head.

Richard Cory had it all, in terms of what modern society calls success. But, as the poet pointed out, it wasn't enough. There was no guarantee that "success" would be meaningful. For Richard Cory, it wasn't. For him, success was a failure.

We are in danger of being a Richard Cory nation. We are one of the richest and most democratic nations in history. But what have we done with our money? There are millions of malnourished people in our country; there are hundreds of horrible ghettos; there are thousands of pockets of poverty. People suffer every day from problems which are barely even *recognized*, much less attended to. And democracy? We have systematically mistreated every minority group that has come to America hoping to find democracy, and we have allowed the general interests of all citizens to fade away in the face of private interests steadily polluting our water, our air, our land. Don't get me wrong. We've come a long way, and we do all right. But since when did "all right" get to be good enough?

It is true that no society will ever be perfect. Nor will any school or student council. That's not the question. Rather, we should be striving to make our society *as perfect as possible*. We should hear the call of the Impossible Dream and take it seriously. Without this striving, problems will be ignored until they explode—and explosions hurt everyone. Perfection may not be attainable, but anarchy and violence and social disintegration *are*. It's not a happy fact.

We students are usually pretty good at detecting phoniness in adult society. We can spot, and we want to correct, the prejudice and falseness that we see around us. But the things we often overlook are our own faults, our own phoniness, our own prejudice. We are concerned about the problems of society. Then why not begin by putting our own house in order? If we can minimize the wrongs in our own schools, we will be taking a large step toward minimizing them in society at large.

The first problem to attack is the fact that our schools are very low in human content. There is really very little positive human interaction in a school day. We don't really pay attention to each other. We stand next to each other for photos in the yearbook, we sit next to each other at football games, and we wait together in the lunch line; but we don't get to know each other, we aren't particularly kind to each other, and we aren't really doing things *together*. We're just trying to get through school, that's all. We wear blinders and stare straight ahead.

A good student council can change the school day from a boring, lonely, superficial experience into one with some depth and genuine enjoyment; it can transform robots and zombies into living, thinking *human* beings. Relevant activities, open to everyone, and student leaders who are actually paying *attention* to individuals can set the wheels in motion. People want to be happy, and they want to have meaningful experiences. You can show them how.

There are a number of large social problems that have important roots in your school. For example, the high school dropout. His prospects are pretty dismal. Without a diploma, it is likely that he will have trouble getting the job he wants, associating with the people he wants, improving his life position the way he wants. If he has a strong will, he can go to night school, or take correspondence courses, or enroll in training programs—thus carrying the double load of supporting himself and trying to get

a diploma at the same time. The dice are loaded against him, and the amount of frustration and disappointment that accompany that fact is immense.

A lot of students leave school because the subjects, the activities, and the people in school do not interest them. Others leave school because they don't "fit in" and don't get good grades. We force them out of school by mocking them or ignoring them or letting them know in hundreds of little ways that we think they're wasting both their time and ours by being in school. Whatever the reason, the high dropout rate in our schools means that we are failing a large part of our student body. If we are really concerned with educating people, we must figure out how to get through to the potential dropout before he leaves school and gets stuck with a life he may not want.

Another large social problem with roots in your school is racial discrimination. Thousands of high schools experience severe racial conflicts or misunderstandings. What could be more important than trying to work these problems out in a peaceful and useful way? There are no easy answers; it is a difficult task in human relations. But if you don't start now, in your own school, where you might be able to do something, then what hope is there for the future? Later on, positions may have hardened and people may have become increasingly bitter.

Thousands of schools are also split down the middle by intellectual prejudice. Many school curriculums are divided into college preparatory and vocational training programs. How do these groups get along in your school? Do the college prep kids think it's nice that the dumb kids have a place to go, to play around and make things with their hands, because they can't do anything with their heads? Do the vocational students think it's nice that the smart guys can have a place to play around with a lot of abstract ideas, because they are too sissy to actually learn how to *do* anything? If so, each group will probably go its own way, staying in its own part of the building, having its own clubs and cliques, and graduating with a genuine antagonism toward the other group. Wouldn't it be useful to heal this split? We all have to live together when we get out of school, so why shouldn't we try to live together while we're *in* school?

In your own student council, you probably discriminate economically. How much do your activities cost? Have you ever totaled up what it costs to pay for student fees, the senior prom,

the yearbook, the newspaper? A poor family with eight kids is just not going to be able to afford it. One dollar per week for a dance or outing means several hundred dollars per year for a large family—money which might be needed badly for food and shelter. Students from poor families will never tell you they aren't going to an activity because of the price—that's natural pride. Next time you decide on a few dollars as the price for an activity because "everyone can afford that much," think again.

It's important to pay attention to these problems in high school, because high school is one of the few common experiences which Americans share while growing up. People's future views are constantly being influenced by what they do and feel and think as students in high school. How can we ignore the importance of making our schools rich in human content, in understanding, in relevant learning? Our failure to reach people while they are young has very damaging effects. People get set in their ways and, if those ways are filled with prejudice and bitterness, it means that solving America's problems is all that much more difficult.

The student council which attempts to reach students, to increase the favorable human content of the school day, to improve the atmosphere for learning—the meaningful student council will have to re-define success. So many of our traditional goals and measures of success for our student councils are irrelevant or outmoded. The dances, the banquets, the poster campaigns, the pep rallies—they haven't broken the surface of the problem. We have gotten so caught up in *things* that we have forgotten about *people*. We have been counting heads when we should have been reaching hearts; we have been figuring out how much money we were making, when we should have been figuring out how many friends we were making. Our vision has been too narrow. We need to approach the problems of our schools with the seriousness we would approach the problems of society at large. They *are* the same problems. I'd suggest you start now and evaluate the traditional programs of your student council. In each case, ask yourself whom it benefits and how it fulfills the purposes of the student council.

Reaching the Silent Majority is probably the toughest single problem that faces a student council. It is tough because the solutions are so hard to pinpoint. "Reaching" someone is not a matter of decimal points figured, cash received, or meetings held.

It is not a matter of posters put up or bulletins read or speeches given or newspapers distributed. It is a matter of your own ability to understand and communicate with people. It is a matter of your own sincerity as a person.

Your task is to open the gates to the Silent Majority and then, to make sure that there is something worth going through the gates *for*. Use the mass media, but don't rely on it. Welcome the Silent Majority, but don't expect it to come. Open your heart, open your mind—and go out to meet it. You'll learn a lot, and perhaps you can teach a little. If you reach a few people, you'll know it where cash and deference and publicity can't proclaim it: inside. And then you'll know what real success feels like. Success with people.

No one speaks to the Silent Majority. Hearing nothing, its members are silent. But it doesn't have to be that way.

About the Author

Kent Keith is a 1970 graduate of Harvard University, currently studying as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, Oxford, England. He has been active in student council work on the state and local level since his junior high school days and has been a frequent speaker at student council conventions and workshops around the country.

As a senior at Roosevelt High School in Honolulu, he founded the Hawaii Student Leadership Institute and served as its director for two years. Since its inception, the workshop, which is the official student council workshop for the state, has been run entirely by students.

During college, Keith served as student council adviser at Rindge Technical School, Cambridge, Mass., and as a part-time teacher and curriculum researcher at Newton High School, Newton, Mass.

In addition, Kent Keith has authored *The Silent Revolution*, the eleventh booklet in the NASC New Directions series, and numerous articles for *Student Life Highlights* and other student council publications.